

**HISTORY OF  
KINGS ISLAND  
ENFIELD CT  
AND FARMER TERRY**

**WRITTEN BY MYRTLE**

**HATHEWAY FULLER** NOVEMBER 1 1958

...rje2014

## **KINGS ISLAND .....ENFIELD CT : FARMER TERRY AND HIS ISLAND**

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**In the entire length of the Connecticut River, there is probably no wilder, more picturesque or fascinating spot than the island situated in the rapids below Enfield Falls, between the towns of Suffield and Enfield in Northern Connecticut. Called "The Great Island" by the early settlers and named King's Island on the county map of 1869, probably because, the King family, whose land is opposite the north end, and who operated a ferry across to Enfield had previously owned it, it is better known as Terry's Island, from the fact that D. Clinton Terry, of the Enfield Terry family, owned and lived on it for twenty-five years. In that length of time it became famous for several happenings, one being the gathering of the Millerites in 1875, when the end of the world was looked for, and another the double wedding of Mr. Terry's two daughters to the Read brothers, of Wilbraham.**

**The island, containing 104 acres and extending the greater part of a mile up and down the river, is seldom visited nowadays, being quite difficult of access, except during periods of low-water, when it is possible to cross on stones near -where the canal aqueduct crosses the mouth of Stony Brook. There are cliffs of some height on the west side and it was formerly densely wooded. It has been logged out over twice, the last time some fifteen or twenty years ago, for its valuable timber. At that time the logs of hemlock, white pine, poplar, and oak were rafted over to the east side by Charles Bishop, who had acquired the timber rights.**

**In the Spring, when the shad and salmon came up the river, in great numbers to spawn, the island was formerly a favorite camping site for roving bands of Indians, who came with their nets and erected their temporary dwellings , to take advantage of the excellent fishing. For several decades, at every session of the Legislature there had been agitation for building a dam across to the west bank of the river as a substitute for the ancient dam at the head of Enfield Rapids, to furnish hydro power for the community. So far, these bills have been defeated.**

**The island has had a colorful history and has changed hands many times, In 1641 it was granted by the Conn. General Court to Rev. Ephraim Huit, Windsor's first minister, but given back to the Court by his will. About 1690 it was bought by John Lewis from the Indians who then claimed it, tradition says for a pound of tobacco. This title was proved invalid and in 1671 the Mass. General Court granted it to Major John Pynchon, founder of Suffield for his work in running the boundary lines between the Massachusetts and Connecticut colonies. At his death, in 1703, it was appraised at 10 pounds, sterling, and was conveyed by his heirs, in 1717, to John and Rev. Ebenezer Devotion and Joshua Leavitt of Suffield. It was owned by General Phineas Lyman 1764 to 1774, when it was sold to Roger Enos, of Windsor. Somewhat later a part of it was bought by John Ely, who built a dam across from the west side about 1787 and established a sawmill. This dam was swept away in**

the flood of 1810 and never rebuilt. Traces of it may still be seen at low -water.

At a later period, the island was owned for a considerable time by the King family. (A descendant of this family says that the purchase price was two yoke of oxen and a barrel of cider.)

In 1864 it was purchased by D. Clinton Terry and Milton Ives, of Suffield. Mr. Ives owned the north end, which he cultivated in part, having at one time a large peach orchard, but he never lived there. Soon after the purchase Mr. Terry started clearing and cultivating his part of the Island and built, near the south end, on a high knoll, a sturdy story-and-a-half clapboarded house. The foundation stones came from the river and the family lived in a tent while the house was being built. Soon a barn and other necessary farm buildings were erected. A clipping from the New York Sun dated 1879, states that when trees north of the house had been thinned out to form a grove, "Farmer Terry", standing on his doorstep to enjoy the view, included in his vision seven towns and as many white church spires.

This grove was often used for local picnics and as a camp-meeting site for the Second Adventists, or Millerites as they were called from the name of their leader. Access to the island was gained by means of a large flat-boat, operated by Mr. Terry, which ran back and forth along a wire cable. Persons wishing to go over were obliged to cross the canal to the tow-path, either by boat or one of the bridges at Windsor Locks and walk to the landing place, where they would "holler" for Mr. Terry to come and get them. Considering the fact that Mr. Terry was quite deaf, this must often have been a considerable strain on the vocal chords of would-be passengers. At times of drought it was sometimes possible to drive across with horse and wagon.

Mr. Terry, known locally as "Clint" Terry, seems to have been an interesting character. He was apparently very versatile as he cultivated his farm, ran a sawmill and operated, with the aid of his two daughters, a "fish-place" on the west bank of the river where shad and alewives were caught, by net, in the Spring. He must also have been something of a cabinetmaker, as he made coffins for the local trade. He was a very devout man and a leader among the Second Adventists in the Hartford-Springfield area. When, in 1873, a day had been set by the Millerites for the ending of the world, a large number of the sect gathered there, expecting to ascend into heaven on the appointed day. It is traditional that they brought ascension robes with them, which they donned for the ascension. "Old-Timers" used to say that some of the more zealous even climbed into the tree-tops to be the first to ascend, but there is some doubt on this point. At any rate, the day came and went, and the Adventists were still on the island.

Now, Mr. Terry, besides being pious, was a very kindly and hospitable man and was sadly imposed upon by his Adventist brethren. Under the excuse of a possible miscalculation in the date, they tarried on. He owned a flock of a hundred or more

**fine turkeys and not until the last turkey had been consumed did the brethren take their departure having almost literally "eaten" him out of house and home", and leaving him much poorer in possessions, if not in faith. Because of this event, one newspaper man has dubbed the island "Isle of the Fanciful Hop-off to Heaven:.**

**The second notable event to take place here was the marriage of the two Terry daughters, in 1878, which came about in this way: Mr. Terry, and his family attended the Adventist camp meeting in Springfield, where his daughter Nellie met William H. Read, a stalwart six-footer from the Wilbraham hills, and became engaged to him. This, of course, meant visiting back and forth, and eventually resulted in the betrothal of Nellie's sister, Sadie, to William's brother, Marshall, another six-footer. Soon thereafter arrangements were made for the wedding, a double ceremony, which took place in the grove, on October 18 of that year.**

**This was a very grand affair. The morning trains that day brought guests from Hartford, Springfield, and surrounding towns, and even from New York. They were met by a gaily-decorated steamer, which carried them up the canal, to be ferried across to the island. The N. Y. Times gave a very elaborate description of the wedding, in the flowery language of the day. Incredible as it seems, a turkey dinner, with all the "fixings", was served to the entire company, of about 300 persons. Photographs were taken and the affair received a great deal of newspaper publicity.**

**The invitation read as follows: Mr. & Mrs. D. C. Terry Request the pleasure of your company at the Marriage and Reception of their Daughters Wednesday Afternoon, Oct. 16, at their Island Home Windsor Locks, Conn. Will H. Read to Nellie M. Terry and Marshall I. Read to Sadie E. Terry 1878.**

**After the departure of the two daughters, the island must have become a lonely place for Mr. Terry and his wife, and he sold it about 1889. He allowed the property to go for a low price, understanding that the purchaser would maintain the property as a home. However, the new owner sold the house, which was removed from the island and is now standing, with some alterations, on Suffield Street, Windsor Locks. It was owned for many years by Charles Clark, the genial colored barber, well-known to two generations of local residents.**

**The property was then acquired by a water-power syndicate, which cut off the timber at that time. It is now owned by the Conn. Light & Power Co. and taxes are paid in Suffield.**

**So far as is known, Mr. Terry was the only person to build a house and live on the island. Today few traces are left to show that it was once inhabited. The foundation stones show where the house stood, with the uncovered well nearby and the trunk of the tree to which the cable for the ferry-boat was attached is still encircled by a piece of rusty chain. Once more, as in the days when it was a favorite camping**

**ground for the red men, its denizens are the deer, the muskrat and the wild-fowl. When the tall trees were still standing they were a favorite haunt and nesting place of the black-crested night heron, locally called "Quocks", from the sound of their cry.**

**Since the timber has been out off, however, they have moved across to the west bank of the river. Only a very few of the older generation living today have a personal recollection of Farmer Terry and his island.!**

**Nathan Stoitz, of Warehouse Point, has written the following reminiscent verses, which appear in "Connecticut River Diary"**

**It snowed on Terry's Island**

**And in the falling snow,**

**I watched old Farmer Terry**

**In the days of long ago**

**Enter the woods behind his house**

**With ax and saw in hand.**

**Then the giant timber crashed**

**Upon his fertile land.**

**Note: only one verse of 4 written**

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**We are located in Enfield, Connecticut USA**